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PRESS RELEASE

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District Man Sentenced to More Than 16 Years in Prison For Crimes Committed As Part of the Congress Park Crew

WASHINGTON - Desmond Thurston, aka Dazz, 33, of Washington, D.C., was sentenced today to 16 years and two months of incarceration for his role in crimes committed by the Congress Park Crew, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Thurston was sentenced by the Honorable Judge Richard W. Roberts in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Upon completion of the prison term, he is to be placed on supervised release for an additional three years.

Thurston was one of six defendants prosecuted by the government during an eight-month trial in 2007 before Judge Roberts. During that trial, the government presented evidence that Thurston, along with his five co-defendants, Antwuan Ball, aka Big Ant, David Wilson, aka Cool Wop, Gregory Bell, aka Boy-Boy, Joseph Jones, aka Jo-Jo, and Dominic Samuels, aka Don, as well as others, were members of a crew that had engaged in a series of crimes, including crack cocaine dealing, armed robbery, attempted murder, and murder in the Congress Park neighborhood of Southeast Washington for more than a decade.

Since March of 2005, a total of 18 individuals have been indicted in connection with this case. Jones and his five co-defendants were the final six defendants remaining from the original March 2005 indictment. The others previously pled guilty or had been found guilty after trial.

The jury in this trial acquitted the six defendants of the charged conspiracy in this case, but convicted them on 18 other felony charges, including two murders and 16 acts of drug-dealing. Thurston was convicted of two counts of distribution of crack cocaine.

Wilson, 33, was convicted of the two murder charges, for the August 1998 slayings of Ronnie "Squid" Middleton and Sabrina Bradley. Evidence showed that the killings were committed by Wilson as part of an ongoing turf war between the Congress Park Crew and one of its rivals, the 1-5 Mob. Wilson faces a mandatory minimum of 30 years incarceration for each of

the two murders. He is to be sentenced by Judge Roberts on March 11, 2011.

The jury was unable to reach a verdict against defendant Dominic Samuels in the August 2002 murder of Jamel Sills, aka Black. However, Samuels subsequently pled guilty to manslaughter while armed and was sentenced in 2008 to a seven-year prison term.

Judge Roberts previously sentenced co-defendants Jones and Bell to 180 months and 192 months of incarceration, respectively.

In addition to Wilson, Ball is awaiting sentencing in the case.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen praised the collective and cooperative efforts of the various law enforcement agencies that worked together to investigate and prosecute this complex case, including the outstanding work of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the FBI/MPD Safe Streets Task Force, and the United States Park Police.

In addition, the U.S. Attorney commended the outstanding work of the Special Agents from the FBI's Washington Field Office; MPD Detectives Anthony Brigidini, Kenneth Todd Williams, Constantinos "Gus" Giannakoulis and Anthony Commodore; William Sepeck and Paul Edwards, of the U.S. Park Police, and Special Investigator Diane Eickman.

Lastly, the U.S. Attorney praised the staff at the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Paralegal Specialist James Mazzitelli; Victim-Witness Advocate Yvonne Bryant; Victim-Witness Specialists Katina Adams, LaVerne Forrest and Debbie Cannon; Intelligence Specialists Frank Morgan, Larry Grasso and Shannon Alexis; and Legal Assistants Dianne Brashears, Carolyn Carter-McKinley, Patricia Hall, and Nadi Ishman. The U.S. Attorney also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Glenn S. Leon, Ann Petalas, and Gilberto Guerrero, who prosecuted the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney M. Jeffrey Beatrice, who led the initial investigation.

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